# Christian Community

Magazine

America's Christian Lifestyle Magazine

John Gray
Talks His New
OWN Show
'The Book of John Gray'



Unsung Heroes
Leadership Awards
Highlights

Christian Community Magazine
May 2017



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# **Christian Community Magazine**

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St. Stephen Missionary
Baptist Church
Women's Day
2017

"Preserving your Life for God"

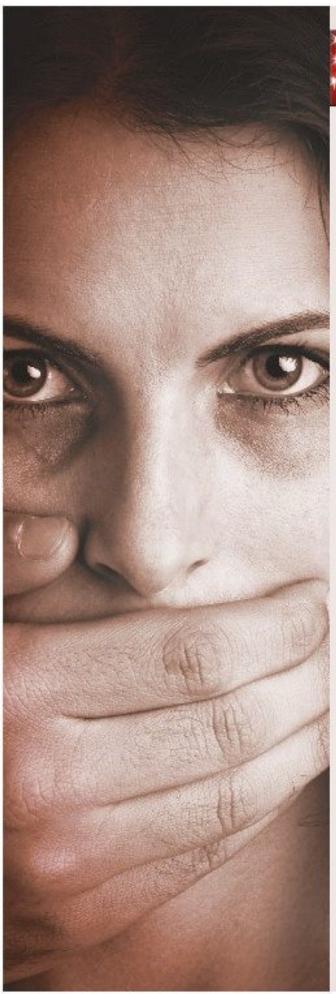
Luke 2:36-38

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# CCM In The News



# STELLAR AWARD WINNING RECORDING ARTIST

### **LUCINDA MOORE**

RETURNS WITH A DYNAMIC NEW RADIO SIN-GLE

### "WALKING IN MY FAVOR"

### ON HER NEW LABEL NALAH MUSIC GROUP

Washington, DC – Stellar Award winning recording artist Lucinda Moore is back with a dynamic new radio single, "Walking in My Favor." The bouncy, melodic rhythm of the song follows Moore's long-standing style of festive contemporary gospel music.

"Walking in My Favor," was written by Moore and produced by Cedric Thompson.

It is the first release on her new recording label, Nalah Music Group, which she founded earlier this year.

The single is availlable on on all major digital outlets.

# Christian Author Releases New Book on Identifying and Breaking Free From Toxic Relationships



Widely acclaimed Christian author and empowerment coach Tarsha Campbell has released a new book, Woman in the Mirror: Ungodly Soul Ties — Break Free to Break Through. As the second installment of her "Woman in the Mirror Empowerment Series," this new book offers a thought-provoking and revolutionary look at unhealthy connections in our lives while presenting a compelling and enlightening point of view to identify these debilitating connections. In addition, the book shares effective ways to sever these destructive bonds.

Armed with personal stories from her own life, biblical examples and fresh insights, the author builds an eye-opening case for the concept of ungodly soul ties, describing what they are, how they are formed and the kinds of incapacitating effects these unhealthy connections have on individuals, families, and groups that can lead to spiritual, relational and psychological desolation. Though revelatory, the book's easy-to-read writing style makes it accessible to mature audiences from all stages of life.

# Unsung Heroes Leadership Awards Highlights



The 5th Annual Unsung Heroes Leadership Awards Dinner, presented by The Inner City Youth Foundation Inc. and LNR Production Studios, took place in March at the opulent Stars On Brand.

Unsung Heroes Awards is an annual leadership Gala that celebrates the most accomplished men and women who are the top athletic and academic achievers, social visionaries, community organizers, emerging leaders, celebrities and humanitarians.

Founder Jeffrey Coprich, Jr. is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley where he was a star running back and one of 22 players nationwide selected to the Allstate American Football Coaches Association Good Works Team for dedication to community service. Coprich was honored through his work with The Essence K. Coprich Library, in memory of his sister Essence Coprich who died at age 7 in a family car accident.

Jeffrey Coprich, Sr. is a longtime community activist who co-founded the "Inner City Destiny Awards." Additionally, he is the founder of the "Inner City Youth Foundation," and "LA Inner City Mass Choir" who was featured on Oxygen's "Fix My Choir"starring gospel superstar Deitrick Haddon and Michelle Williams.

Learn more **CLICK HERE** 









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# Making An Impact



pecial Needs Network's mission is to raise public awareness of developmental disabilities and to impact public policy, while providing education and resources to families, children and adults. SNN serves as a link between under-served communities and mainstream developmental disability organizations and governmental institutions, which often fail to address issues specific to these communities. SNN firmly believes that dignity, hope and opportunity are the birthright of all children.

Founded in 2005, Special Needs Network, Inc. (SNN) grew out of the struggles of Areva D. Martin, Esq. after her son Marty was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2. After finding it incredibly difficult to access services for Marty, Ms. Martin became aware of the enormous challenges faced by families affected by developmental disabilities in underserved communities – in particular, the neighborhood of South Los Angeles.

A Harvard-trained attorney, Ms. Martin used her entrepreneurial and legal skills, as well as her own experiences navigating the complex system of care, to create a parent-centered organization with a mission to help the communities in need through four resolutions:

# SPECIAL NEEDS NETWORK

# Making a Difference for the Developmentally Disabled

- 1. Reduce the waiting period for families to have their children diagnosed;
- Bring education, resources, and services directly to the community;
- 3. Provide unique learning opportunities for children and young adults with developmental disabilities; and
- 4. Forge an action-based coalition of families empowered to self-advocate at all levels of government.

Focusing on health and human services, education and awareness, and outreach and advocacy, our programs have provided resources and services to more than 20,000 families to date, effectively establishing Special Needs Network as the premier nonprofit organization in South Los Angeles working on issues of autism and related developmental disabilities.

Learn more about their work at <a href="http://snnla.org/">http://snnla.org/</a>



# Living the Life

# Trusting in what God Is Doing

hen we find ourselves in a bad situation and need help from an outside source, finding someone we can trust is a top priority. Life gives us ample opportunity to exercise our decision-making skills, and sometimes we make a wrong choice that puts us at risk of harm. Many of us can remember making bad calls because we ignored what God was telling us to do, insisted on doing things our own way, and regretted it later. Our own fears can cause us to resist God, but trusting in what he's doing in our lives positions us to benefit from his promise of protection.

God not only protects us from the evil we see around us, but he also protects us from ourselves. We're imperfect beings, and we can be our own worst enemy when it comes to making wise choices. Humans can be amazingly short-sighted. Fortunately, God is ready to intervene in the lives of those willing to trust him. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

The key word here is "trust." We've become accustomed to trying to find our own solutions and being self-sufficient, and it feels strange to rely on someone else. But there will always be situations that are too much for us to handle alone. It's discouraging to stare at trouble and not know how to tackle it, but we can always depend on God. "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee" (Psalm 5:11).

From where he sits, God's perspective on our lives is much different than ours. When we think we know where our lives are going, letting him shed illumination on the issue is always wise. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). We can believe we've made a perfect decision, but there's always a margin of error. God simply doesn't make mistakes, and his assessment of the situation is always perfect.

The message we get from the world is that we must control our own destinies. That sounds dramatic and exciting, but the reality is that we have a limited understanding of the concept. We think we know exactly what we want to do, but sometimes our decision-making is flawed. "There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death" (Proverbs 14:12, NLT). When we take a wrong turn on the path of life, God is ready to point out the right direction.

We'll always be susceptible to making the occasional bad decision, and God knows that. He pledges never to abandon us, even when we do things that could backfire on us. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). The times when we're at our weakest and most confused are the times when we can most feel his strong presence.



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# **Cover Story**

John Gray Talks About His New Show on OWN Network

'The Book of John Gray'

By Joy Sewing

hn Gray isn't a typical preacher, you know, buttoned up and preachy like.

At his home in River Oaks, with his wife, Aventer, by his side, the associate pastor at Lakewood Church spits a few lyrics by the late rapper Notorious B.I.G. and talks about slapping his belly, which tickles her.

Cuddled up on a living-room sectional, the couple engages in such sweet banter onlookers feel happy just to be in the room.

John is funny - actually laugh-till-you-cry hilarious, which makes sense, since he's a comedian. And a gospel singer. But he also is a regular guy, even down to his black track suit with a hoodie.

As Oprah Winfrey told him, "You are not my Daddy's preacher." The world is about to see that for themselves as "The Book of John Gray," a reality show focusing on his life with Aventer, premieres at 9 p.m. Saturday on Oprah Winfrey's OWN network. It's the first of three major events in April that suggest Gray's exposure is about to get an exponential boost.

He also kicks off the latest season of Winfrey's "Super Soul Sunday" series at 10 a.m. April 16 (that's Easter Sunday) on the network, and his first book, "I am Number 8: Overlooked and Undervalued but Not Forgotten by God," (Hachette) comes out on April 18. The book title refers to the Bible's story of David, the eighth son and an outcast who became the chosen one.

Everything is changing, and nothing is changing, says Gray, who moved to Houston with his wife and two children - John Gray IV, 5, and Theory Aspyn-Sky, 4, - to join Lakewood just four years ago.

"The more God keeps opening doors, the less I want them. I know this sounds weird, but I treasure anonymity. I don't desire fame. If it comes, it won't move me. ... We know who we are and what we stand for."

The show's eight episodes, which were filmed in Houston from last October through mid-March, show Gray at church, at home and helping everyday people through life's challenges.

"It's a dramedy docu-series with our family in the back-ground so he's really coming home to share with me who he met, what happened, what can we do to help," says Aventer, who is director of Lakewood's dance ministry and runs John Gray Innertainment. "The country is hurting right now. We all need some hope, joy and peace and to respect one another for each other's views."



Although there are serious moments, and even tears, laughter is part of the dynamic on camera and off. Gray cracks jokes, and his wife laughs infectiously, like a school girl.

"We're at home, kids are running around. We're emailing and texting. Did you know I have 133,000 emails?" Gray says.

Aventer blurts: "I sent him an email that said, 'The house is on fire!' It hasn't been opened yet."

"Did you really do that?" Grayasks.

Both crack up with laughter.

More importantly, the "Book of John Gray" is about love - for each other, their family and the community.

"We love people right out of the situation they are in, into a healthy place," Aventer says. "We don't solve the problems. We just offer perspective and present Jesus in a very real way."

### The dreamer

The first episode of "The Book of John Gray" has him enlisting several pastor friends to help a single mother who has been displaced by Louisiana floods and is now questioning her faith.

Gray instructs the woman to do something to "bless" someone else.

Gray knows the value of being blessed, starting with his wife. "Let me just say this about my wife. I'm not here, right now if she's not here. ... When I was courting her, God said, 'I'm sending her to save your life.' " Turns out, she did.

On their honeymoon, Aventer, an Alabama native who holds a bachelor's degree in cardiopulmonary science from Florida A&M University and a master's degree in health service administration from Strayer University, told John he needed to see a doctor about his heavy snoring. He was ultimately diagnosed with severe obstructive sleep apnea and could have gone into cardiac arrest had it not been treated immediately.

The couple, who have been married six years, actually met some years earlier in New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, where she was a dance teacher and where he was the singles' pastor church. Their paths crossed several times during the year before Gray even knew her name.

But one day he noticed her - sporting an arm tattoo, wearing Baby Phat jeans and open-toe shoes with a French pedicure - and he was enthralled. But he says he jumped to judgement.

"I thought she was a stripper, but her worship was real," Gray says, laughing. "See, I judged her. She taught me never to judge anyone by what you see. ... I'm the dreamer. She puts feet to the dream."





John Gray, who was born and raised in Cincinnati, was directing his church choir at age 7. He was part of the traveling gospel choir as a student at the University of Cincinnati and preached his first sermon shortly after he turned 21.

Soon afterward, he joined the cast of a play starring Grammy-award winning gospel artist Kirk Franklin. That led to more musical tours and allowed him to blend his faith with comedy. He released two musical albums, a comedy DVD and appeared on television shows such as "Sister, Sister" and "Tyler Perry's The House of Payne."

In 2010, he was ordained at Northview Christian Church in Dothan, Ala., Aventer's home town, and they were married that same year.

Back in their River Oaks living room, Gray turns funny again.

"If God told me to go to Dothan, Alabama, I'd go. It's my favorite city, wonderful people, it's quiet and you can go fishing. They've got the peanut festival down there. They got a big ol' carnival and that corn. What's that corn?" he asks Aventer.

"Kettle corn?"

"Not that corn."

"Corn dogs?"

"No! Roasted corn. Ooh, yes, I love the simple things," Gray says.

Some might assume the Grays' reality show on Winfrey's network happened because Lakewood pastor Joel Osteen and Winfrey are friends. It's not the case, though Osteen has been tremendously supportive.

In 2015, the couple was approached by a production company with the idea. They shot a pilot and then took it to various networks. While they hoped OWN would want it, they weren't certain.

### **Tea with Oprah**

"I was preaching on a Wednesday and at the end of my message I said these words: 'Check your phone. Your miracle is on your phone. Check your email, voice mail, text messages, someone is trying to reach you."

When Gray finished his sermon he saw he missed a call from OWN. Winfrey wanted to meet him and invite him to be a part of her "Super Soul Sunday" series.

He literally ran around the entire church with excitement.

When Winfrey signed off on the project, the couple was speechless.

"After the Super Soul Sunday taping, Oprah says we now need to go to her house to talk about further business," Gray says. "So she told her staff to take us to her home for tea. People start scrambling. It was obvious this didn't happen often."

So as they were being driven to Winfrey's palatial estate, Gray says he heard Negro spirituals in his head.

"How do you process that? To tell someone, 'I can't talk right now I'm being driven to Oprah's house for tea.' Then here she comes. You look at this beautiful expansive land, and there's the ocean in the distance, and she's like, 'It's a little cold out here. Are you guys cold?' "

The coupled stared at the media mogul unsure whether to agree or not. Then Winfrey takes his wife's hand and walks down a path.

This is significant, Gray says, because a few months earlier, Aventer woke up from a dream in which she was in Winfrey's house, holding her hand and walking somewhere.

"I told her to go back to bed. We had no clue that OWN was on the radar," he says.

## Spreads hope through faith

Now that they are part of the OWN family, Gray has even larger platform to spread hope through his faith.

"We unapologetically love Jesus. What we represent are two people who are on personal faith journeys and have encountered Jesus in very real ways, he says.

"What people are going to see on this show is an African-American man who is trying to figure out how to be a husband when he didn't see a good marriage growing up, how to raise kids when his father left when he was four, how to preach when your faith is low, and how to fight for others when you're still in the darkness yourself. That, to me, is an accurate picture of faith."



# VASHAWN MITCHELL'S 'JOY' #1 ACROSS THE BOARD "JOY" TOPS BOTH BILLBOARD GOSPEL

**AIRPLAY** 

New York, NY — Multiple award winner and Grammy nominee VaShawn Mitchell celebrates another Number 1 song, with his high-spirited and popular tune "Joy."

"Joy" has led the way for Mitchell's seventh album Secret Place: Live in South Africa since its release last year. "Joy" has spent 13 consecutive weeks in the Top Five on the Gospel Airplay Charts, spending six of those weeks at #1 on the Mediabase Gospel Radio Chart. The popularity of the song has been abetted by the over 2 million Vevo views and 3 million plus audio streams.

Considered a mainstay in Gospel, Mitchell consistently offers chart-topping songs that connect with audiences around the world. Mitchell's 2016 conference and live recording in South Africa solidified him as a national and international star.

Mitchell stays busy this summer with several appearances across the country. In May, he will partner with the American Heart Association to perform at the Most Powerful Voices Concert and the Power to End Stroke event. Additional dates in June include performances at the Family Fest & Memorial Day concert in Columbia, SC, Chicago Gospel Music Festival, Gospel Music Association's Immerse Conference in Nashville, TN and the Rejoice Music Soul Food Fest in VA. For more information go to VashawnMitchell.com & follow him @VashawnMitchell on social media and on Spotify.



# Gospel Artist Spotlight

Your monthly round up of Gospel Artists to Watch!

### **MEANT BY GOD**

"Anticipating"

WEBSITE: https://www.facebook.com/MeantByGod/

The new generation of Gospel Quartet groups are on the rise more than ever. Blending the traditional soulful stylings of legendary groups like The Swan Silvertones, The Fairfield Four, Slim and the Supreme Angels and The Mighty Clouds of Joy with their own contemporary and worship style, the new school quartet groups are continuing to sustain the rich legacy of quartet music while creating new fans by adding a modern-day musicality and presentation of the beloved genre. Delivering a fresh and engaging contemporary quartet (quar-temporary) sound is the group MEANT BY GOD.





## Autumn Cannon

**Vocalist Autumn Cannon Releases New Single & Book** "Why Not Me"

WEBSITE: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/AutumnInWorship/">https://www.facebook.com/AutumnInWorship/</a>

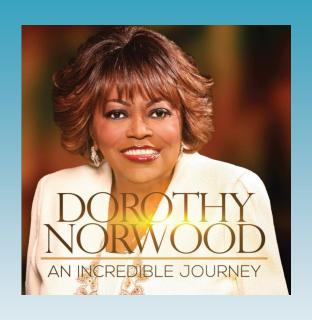
Background Vocalist AUTUMN CANNON Steps Forward For Solo Career With "Why Not Me" Radio Single and Inspirational Book

Having toured the U.S. singing background for blues artists Willie Clayton, Omar Cunningham, Kenne Wayne and touring for three years with the popular Festival of Praise Tour (Fred Hammond, Donnie McClurkin, Hezekiah Walker, Israel Houghton, Karen Clark-Sheard, Kim Burrell, etc), singer AUTUMN CANNON is stepping from behind the BGV mic to the lead mic in Godly confidence with a emotional and inspiring new single and book "Why Not Me".

# **Gospel Legend Dorothy Norwood Releases** New Single "It Could Have Been Me" feat **Dorinda Clark-Cole**

WEBSITE: http://www.dorothynorwood.com/

Dorothy Norwood Music Group (DMNG) releases new single "It Could Have Been Me" featuring Dorinda Clark-Cole. Get ready from some soul stirring, foot tapping and hand clapping traditional gospel music, with a contemporary flare.



### "God That Saves

by Iron Bell Music

WEBSITE: <a href="https://ironbellmusic.com/">https://ironbellmusic.com/</a>

Comprised of songwriters and performers Stephen McWhirter, Joel Gerdis and Josh Glauber, Iron Bell Music is the fruition of worship nights held year-round for the community of Louisville at an area barn. Performing well-known worship songs along with their own originals throughout each evening gathering, the worship nights

## **MONAE MILLER**

"Forever Alive"

Website: https://www.facebook.com/

monaemillermusic/

This project has been six years in the making. The 2nd CD project released by Monae Miller. A mixture of r&b, soul, jazz, and gospel infused into one. Monae Miller's sound has been compared to Jill Scott, India Arie, Erykah Badu, and Lisa McClendon.



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# **Grace Fellowship Ministries**

Bishop James G. Belle and First Lady Elaine Bell

**Grace Fellowship Ministries Church** P.O. Box 343 24084 Postal Ave Moreno Valley, CA 92556 P: (951) 247-2004 F: (951) 488-0809

Sunday

Sunday School - 9:30 AM Sunday Morning Service - 11:30 AM Wednesday

Noon Bible Study - 12:00 PM Evening Bible Study - 7:30 PM

# **About Grace Fellowship Ministries**

**OVER 45 YEARS OF GOD'S FAVOR** 

God has bought the Grace Fellowship Ministries Church a mighty long way down through the years. We have grown from the little church which was started in the home of Sister Willie Mae Thomas in 1964 to a thriving congregation doing a service for the Lord.

Pastor James G. Belle was born October 23, 1949 in Abington, Pennsylvania. When he was six months old, his family moved to Springfield, Ohio. He was educated in the Springfield public school system and graduated from Springfield South High School.

He has been married to First Lady Frances Elaine Jackson Belle forty (47) years. They are the parents of three lovely daughters, Debra Taylor (Matthew), Nichole, and Christina Jordan (Nathan). They have four precious grandchildren, and one great grandchild.





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# Calendar of Events

Submit your events. Learn how your event can be listed and featured.

Email us: spmgmedia@gmail.com



### Spirit West Coast - Friday, June 9 at 4 PM

Citizens Business Bank Arena - TICKETS

Spirit West Coast is returning to Ontario again this year featuring Christian music's forerunners: TobyMac, Crowder, Mac Powell of Third Day, Phil Wickham, Hollyn & Zach Williams! The festival, which began in 1996, is the premier one-day family festival in Southern California offering award-winning music performances, speakers, and activities for all ages. The event will be presented at Citizens Business Bank Arena, and will bring together some of the largest names in the CCM industry for a day of fun, encouraging music.

## **Full Gospel Conference 2017**

June 27th - 30th, 2017: Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International presents The Full Gospel Conference 2017 at the Orlando County Convention Center, 9800 Universal Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32819. The 2017 focus is on "Momentum." For host hotels, itinerary and registration information, www.fullgospelbaptist.org.



# RHYTHM

## **Rhythm Of Gospel Awards**

**June 21st - 25th, 2017**: The 2017 Rhythm Of Gospel Awards will be held in Jacksonville, Florida. Host hotel: Downtown Omni. The event recognizes churches, pastors, choirs and independent gospel artists nationwide for their outstanding contributions to Gospel. For the 2017 nominees, showcase opportunities, registration and more information, visit-

### MegaFest 2017

**June 28th - July 1st, 2017:** MegaFest 2017 powered by Pepsico will be held in Dallas, Texas. The ManPower event features Bishop T.D. Jakes, John Gray, Dr. Shane Perry, Pastor Bill Winston, Joseph Prince, Tye Tribbett and others. For more information, visit www.mega-fest.org





### **Quartet Division Showcase**

June 15th, 2017: The Quartet Division of The North Carolina Gospel Announcers Guild - GMWA presents their Quartet Division Showcase featuring special guest artists and judges including Harvey Watkins, Jr., Doc McKenzie & The Hi-Lites, Keith Wonderboy Johnson, Rev. Arvetra Jones, Evelyn Turrentine-Agee, Darrell McFadden & The Disciples and Teddy Cross. The event will be held at the Millennium Hotel, 2800 Campus Walk Avenue, Durham, NC 27705. 6:30 pm. For more, visit www.ncgag.com.

### **Tampa Bay Gospel Awards**

**September 29th - 30th, 2017:** The Third Annual Tampa Bay Gospel Awards will be held in Tampa, Florida. The event honors independent gospel groups, artists and others from across the state of Florida. For the 2017 nominees, hosts and more details, visit www.tampabaygospelawards.com or call Jorad Holmes, CEO & Founder, at 941-526-0577

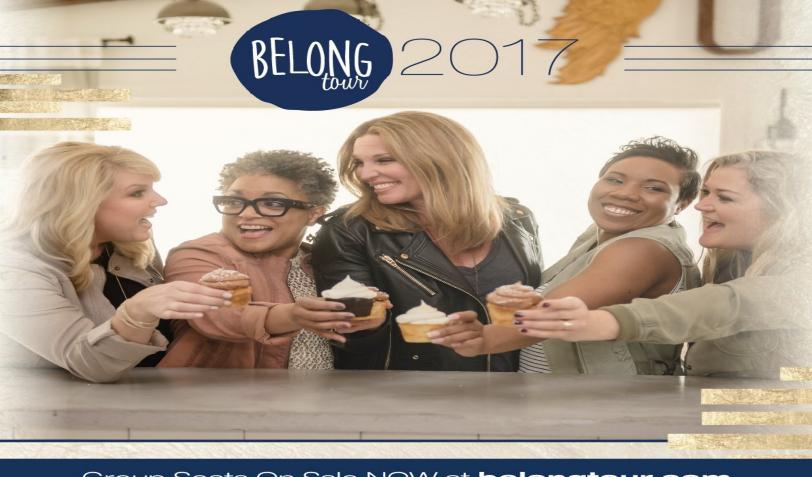




### **Voices Of Gospel Music Awards**

**September 8th - 9th, 2017:** The 2nd Annual Voices Of Gospel Music Awards will be held in Mobile, Alabama. The event recognizes, appreciates and honors independent and mainstream gospel artists. For the 2017 nominees, voting procedures and more details, visit www.vogma.org or call 251-268-9585. Rev. Gary Johnson is CEO & Founder





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